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'Every Woman Deserves a Stage, Mic and Audience': Meet the Entrepreneur Behind the Pink Mentor Network

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Attendees at a Pink Mentor Network event. Courtesy photo.

By Courtney Gabrielson

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[The Pink Mentor Network](#), Charlotte's first mentorship collective, was created when founder Stacy Cassio was at the end of her rope.

"It definitely started in my own quest to find female mentorship," she told Charlotte Inno. "I was the head of engineering for a client-based, male-dominated team ... and that environment made me want strong female [mentorship] even more."

Connecting with solid mentors and developing rich relationships outside of her workplace was difficult to do well, she soon realized.

So, in April 2017, she launched a monthly mentor dinner as an after-work passion project. The programming was simple: cool women doing equally cool things would meet for a meal, swap stories and solutions, and encourage each other. Limiting the event to a meal meant that those who wanted fellowship and those who wanted to pour into their peers had the opportunity to do so — without signing their lives away.

“People don’t realize how much they have to share until [there’s an opportunity].”

As these events became increasingly popular, Cassio decided to establish Popup Mentor, the business arm of the Pink Mentor Network, in 2018. The move wasn’t just the result of meeting an increasing need; Cassio’s passion project was eclipsing her other professional interests.

“Honestly, it was something I was kind of shoved into,” Cassio said. “It became all-consuming.”

Now, Cassio’s business offers not only its signature events (between four and six each month), but also formal mentorship and recruitment opportunities, as well as a membership.

“The group has gotten big enough to sustain industry-specific mentorship — tech, marketing, HR, leadership, entrepreneurship and creative,” she added. Practically, that means that members can lean into opportunities that suit their own career paths (and are free to dip toes into other lanes if, say, marketing insight could help their entrepreneurial pursuits).

This kind of environment has established deep bonds between members, which in turn creates vulnerability and encourages actual growth, Cassio said, adding that there are opportunities for those who have felt voiceless to express themselves freely. After all, the Network’s founding principles are, “I never met a woman I couldn’t learn from” and “every woman deserves a stage, mic and audience.”

Cassio, who enjoys greeting members with a warm hug, added that she herself has been inspired by the Pink Mentor Network.

“I had zero idea what I was getting into when I started,” she said. “Everything I have learned has been from members of the community.”

One of those tidbits was that women need six different mentors to excel in their careers.

“One mentor won’t have the answer,” she said.

Instead, women should seek professional, leadership, industry pioneer, trendsetter, “good for your soul” and work advocate mentors. It’s these types of leaders she hopes that members and event attendees can find within the Network.

To become a member, interested parties text “mentor” to 484484. Then, they can decide to pay either \$190 for an annual fee or \$19 per month. Perks include first-access to event tickets, job postings from corporate sponsors, private social media groups and more. There is now even a podcast, dubbed “Unladylike,” where members tell stories from their own experiences.

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There’s a diversity of thought and background that makes these Network stories unique.

“It’s interesting; the only thing our members have in common is interest in growth and learning,” she added. “Age — it just varies. Industry varies, which is so great.”

Sustaining the growth and community that the Network has established – and finding ways to do even more – is something Cassio said is on the docket for her organization. That “even more” includes building the tech behind the Popup Network (which she pitched about on Aug. 15's PitchBreakfast), discovering how to scale outside of the Queen City and providing additional, practical tools for mentorship and members' job searches. There's interest in Raleigh and New York locations, too.

“I don't have the bandwidth to produce on that [just yet],” Cassio said. “We're bootstrapping to get there.”

Whatever the future holds for Cassio and the Network, her passion for creating more space for women is unwavering — and she hopes it's an attitude that continues to spread.

“Tools like this are needed for women until there's representation in [professional spaces],” she said. “I definitely urge women who are in those places, and men who have the opportunity, to look to the women they can bring behind them.”

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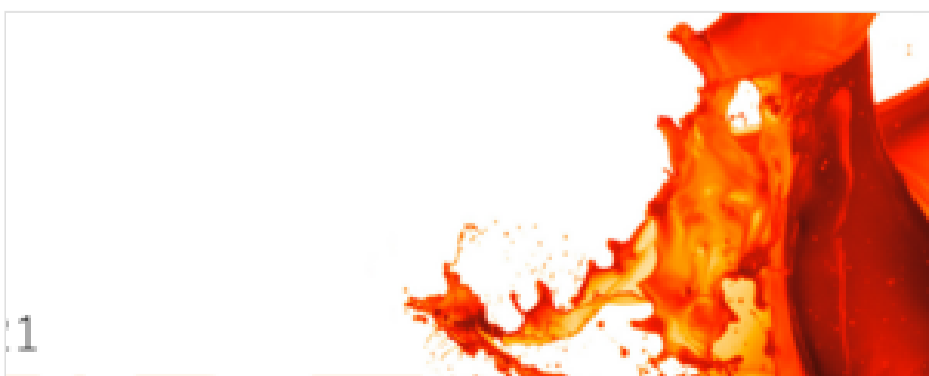
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